year 2004-05 based on the large sample survey of consumer expenditure data of the 61st Round of NSS. These estimates are made based on persons and not households. As such, the total number of BPL households as on 1st January 2008 is not available. As per the latest estimate, available for the year 2004-05 based on the large sample survey of consumer expenditure data of the 61st Round (July 2004-June 2005) of the NSSO, 30.17 crore persons (27.5% of the total population) lived below the poverty line.

(c) and (d) The Ministry of Rural Development conducts the BPL Census generally in the beginning of a Five Year Plan to identify the BPL households in the rural areas who could be targeted under its various programmes. Last BPL Census was conducted in 2002. For the next BPL Census, an Expert Group to recommend the suitable methodology to identify the BPL families in the rural areas has been constituted by the Ministry of Rural Development in August, 2008.

Under Swaran Jayanti Shahri Rozgar Yojana (SJSRY) of Ministry of Housing & Urban Poverty Alleviation, house-to-house survey is carried out by the States/Union Territories for the identification of genuine beneficiaries of the scheme among the urban population on the basis of certain economic and non-economic parameters. The States/UTs are requested from time to time to carry out such BPL Survey on the basis of the revised/updated State Specific Poverty Lines released by the Planning Commission.

Environment clearance for infrastructure projects

*58. SHRI RAJEEV SHUKLA:
Dr. T. SUBBARAMI REDDY:
Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether a High Power Ministry of Finance panel has recommended that infrastructure projects should be subjected to simpler environmental clearance rules;

(b) if so, whether under Environment Impact Assessment (E1A) Notification, projects need to get numerous clearances under sections 3,6 and 25 of the Environment (Projection) Act, 1986;

(c) if so, whether the panel had suggested that industrial/infrastructure projects should be allowed to bypass these provisions and that EIA Notification should be comprehensive enough to cover all other rules and regulations; and

(d) if so, what are the other suggestions made by the panel and to what extent they have been approved and implemented?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE (SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The Expert Group constituted in the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has recommended that the environment clearance prescribed for industrial / infrastructural projects under the terms of the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification of 2006 should be made comprehensive enough to cover the requirements of multiple rules formulated under various sections of the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

(d) The other major simplifications, suggested by the Expert Group, in the existing procedure of environmental clearances, are given in the Statement. A High Power Committee (HPC) has been constituted under the chair of Secretary. Planning Commission to examine the recommendations of the Expert Group on statutory clearances.

Statement

Simplifications suggested in the existing system of environment clearances by the Expert Group

i. The State level Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) should be constituted expeditiously for the remaining States (19 out of 28 States and 4 out of 7 UTs have constituted the authorities so far) so that the appraisal process in respect of Category 'B' projects is de-centralized and completed at the States' level.

ii. Standardized Terms of Reference (ToRs) should be evolved for activities which are of repetitive nature.

iii. It should be endeavored to hold meetings of the sectoral Expert Appraisal Committees [EACs] (in MoEF) and State EACs (in SEIAAs) at regular intervals and at least once every month.

iv. Certain categories of projects - of simple and repetitive nature - should be exempted from public hearing.

v. The environment protection guidelines/processes for clearance should be re-drafted/re-engineered in line with the general recommendations of the report: application formats and proformas to be objective and clearly defined; data requirements to be clearly identified; public hearings to be conducted in a transparent manner, with well defined questionnaires for eliciting information from project affected persons (PAPs); the entire process of according clearances - by all major Central and State authorities - to be web enabled; timelines to be -defined in respect of all major clearances; and, a 'deemed' system of clearances to be put in place, where the application is taken as approved if no other intimation is provided till the date of expiry of the prescribed timeline.

Research work in Deemed Universities

*59. SHRI MAHMOOD A. MADANI:
SHRI SANTOSH BAGRODIA:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state;

(a) the basis of recognizing an institution as Deemed University;

(b) whether they are supposed to conduct research in sunrise areas;

(c) if so, the method of assessing the research work conducted in these universities in such sunrise disciplines;

(d) whether the University Grants Commission ascertains the academic and research infrastructure and financial position required to undertake such research, before granting them the Deemed University status;